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PRESS ADVISORY

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December 15, 1994

Secretary of Defense William J. Perry will present a speech at the 50th Anniversary Commemoration Banquet at the Regal Riverfront Hotel, Grand Ballroom, 200 South 4th Street, St. Louis, Mo., on Saturday, December 17, 1994, at 7:40 p.m. (CST). The banquet honors veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

Secretary Perry will conduct a media availability in the hotel at 6:20 p.m. News media representatives interested in attending the media availability and/or covering the event may contact Major Deb Faber at the hotel, (314) 241-9500, extension 5171.

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS AT BANQUET HONORING VETERANS OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE
ST. LOUIS, MO
DECEMBER 18, 1994

Fifty years ago yesterday in the Ardennes region of Belgium and Luxembourg, 20 German divisions attacked a force of six American divisions. Thus began what Winston Churchill called the greatest American battle of the Second World War -- the Battle of the Bulge.

The Germans, achieving complete surprise, expected to make a rapid breakthrough to the North Sea, thereby trapping 30 Allied divisions. But the heroic resistance of the Allied defenders defeated this bold move.

We live in freedom today because of what you did 50 years ago.

Tonight I want to draw on your experience at the Battle of the Bulge to find some lessons for America today. You know all too well that we were not prepared for the Battle of the Bulge. In the fall of 1944, the war in Europe was moving decisively in our favor. It was tough going, and the casualties were heavy, but we were moving ahead.

In October, forces of the U.S. 1st Army under General Hodges took Aachen. In November, forces of the 3rd Army under General Patton captured Metz. General Eisenhower, General Bradley, and General Montgomery all believed that the Germans couldn't possibly muster the forces for a serious counter-attack. They believed that the most the Germans could do was mount a spoiling attack to delay further Allied offenses.

The Ardennes was called "a ghost front." Let me quote from the daily situation report of the VIII Corps, December 15th: "There is nothing to report."

In fact, by that date the Germans had mustered an attacking force of some 200,000 men, 1,000 tanks, and almost 2,000 artillery pieces, with more than 300,000 more men poised behind them. Our intelligence forces had no idea of this. The weather cut off our aerial reconnaissance. Radio silence by the Germans cut off our communications intelligence. Some of you were in foxholes or in villages in the Ardennes. Others were on airfields waiting for the weather to clear. None of you expected the onslaught that was coming.

Early on the morning of December 16, 1944, when the Nazi troops stormed through the thinly defended, stark woods of the Ardennes, we were taken by complete surprise. We lost 60 miles of hard-earned ground. We suffered severe strains on the U.S.-British alliance. But you rallied from the surprise attack and fought back. You faced the best that the Germans could throw at you. You fought the breakthrough with true grit. In January, your counter-attack drove the German army back into Germany, setting the stage for its surrender.

So the Battle of the Bulge, which could have been a disastrous defeat, ended in a great victory, which broke the back of the German army. You and your comrades paid a terrible price in blood. With some 77,000 casualties, the Battle of the Bulge was the bloodiest battle in American history -- bloodier than Antietam; bloodier than Gettysburg; bloodier than Pearl Harbor; and bloodier than the entire Normandy invasion.

As the Secretary of Defense, my 24 hour-a-day concern is the security of the United States. Tonight I will focus on how important this responsibility is for all of us, and what we're doing with our military forces today to be prepared for any possible future threats.

It would be very easy for us to be complacent today about threats to our security, to believe there's nothing to report. The Cold War is over. The Soviet Union no longer exists. But instead we face a new era with new dangers -- the threat of regional conflict, ethnic and sectarian upheavals all over the world, and the danger of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. We know how very real and very dangerous these threats are, and we must be prepared to deal with them.

Being prepared means having the right strategy, the right equipment, and the right troops. I want to give you some brief examples of what we're doing in each of these three areas.

First, strategy. We were surprised at the Battle of the Bulge because our intelligence did not detect the German build-up. Today our sensors allow us to see

deep into a potential enemy's rear, day and night, and under nearly all weather conditions. Today our forces will not be caught unawares by an enemy build-up of the magnitude which you faced.

This past October, for example, our intelligence sensors alerted us to the deployment of three Iraqi divisions heading for the Kuwait border. We detected these and responded to them while the divisions were still en-route.

Another part of our strategic preparedness is our forward-based force structure. Even though the Warsaw Pact is gone, we are still keeping 100,000 troops in Europe, because we believe that these forces have a stabilizing effect on European security. Hopefully, they will keep us from ever again having to fight a war in Europe like your generation and the generation before you did. We're also keeping forces and equipment forward-deployed in the Pacific and in the Persian Gulf.

Let me give you one example of how critical it is to our strategy to have good intelligence and a forward-based force structure.

Early this October, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shalikashvili, came into my office with some intelligence photos that clearly showed that Iraq was in the process of moving some of its elite Republican Guard divisions towards Kuwait. We did not know what Saddam Hussein was up to, but we did not want to take any chances. So we responded immediately by making a massive movement of men and weapons to the Gulf.

Back in 1990 when Iraq made a similar deployment on the Kuwait border, we had no forces or equipment based in the Gulf, and Iraq marched right into Kuwait. It took us months to put our forces in place. Then we had to fight a war to force Iraq out of Kuwait. This time, nine days after we began our deployments, Iraq's forces turned around and went back to the barracks. This time we had timely intelligence, and this time we had significant forces forward-deployed. We originally had 80 tactical aircraft in theater, which we increased to 200 within a few days. We had pre-positioned the equipment for an armored brigade in Kuwait. We were able to man and move that brigade to the Iraqi border in just a few days. We had a carrier battle group and a Marine amphibious ready group in the Persian Gulf in a few days.

I believe this was a classic example of how being prepared allows us to meet potential threats before they turn into actual conflicts.

Being prepared for future threats and conflicts also means having the right weapons.

At the end of World War II you were using equipment and weapons that literally did not exist at the beginning of the war, four years earlier. In Desert Storm, on the other hand, we did not have the time to manufacture new weapons. It was a "come-as-you-are" war. We believe that most potential future conflicts will be just that -- they will be "come-as-you-are" wars. That's why it's so important to have the right weapons and the right equipment in the hands of our troops today -- and we do.

In Desert Storm we all saw the pictures on TV of precision-guided munitions hitting their exact targets. Precision-guided munitions and the stealth technology of our airplanes allowed us to knock out key Iraqi command and control centers in the first few hours of the war. These weapons are what we call "force multipliers" -- they allow us to defeat forces that may be numerically superior to our forces.

Also, in the Battle of the Bulge, lack of situation awareness was a real problem for both troops and their commanders. More than 18 hours after artillery attacks began in the Ardennes, General Eisenhower's headquarters still had little information on the size of the attack. In the field, you were pinned down in foxholes or in your tanks with no idea where the enemy was, or, for that matter, where the rest of the members of your platoon were.

I had an interesting discussion with Lt. Ben Layton who I believe is here tonight. He told me that on December 17th he was commanding his platoon, and he was sent to the Division G-2 for information about the disposition of forces. The G-2 told him, "Lieutenant, please forgive us, but we don't know what the hell is going on." That was December 17th.

Today, the Joint STARS surveillance aircraft locates every enemy vehicle on the battlefield. Our global positioning satellites allow us to precisely determine the location of all friendly units. Our digital communication systems rapidly pass this situation awareness to our tanks and to our aircraft. We cannot eliminate the fog of war, but we can lift it enough to give our forces a decisive advantage on the battlefield.

So we have good intelligence, forward-deployment, and the best equipment of any Army in the world. But ultimately, America's security still comes down to the courage, the training, and the morale of each individual soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine. No one knows this better than you who fought at the Bulge. As one

historian put it, the Battle of the Bulge was a place where bravery counted for more than brilliant maneuvers.

In the Army of today, as well as 50 years ago, people count. People count. My most important task since the day I was sworn in as Secretary of Defense has been to maintain the high quality and the high morale of our people in uniform. I inherited high quality forces with great morale, and I intend to pass the same along to my successor.

Everywhere I go in my travels as Secretary of Defense, I'm amazed by the quality of our men and women in uniform today. I'm not the only one who sees it. Last year we took General Nikolayev, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Russian General Staff, on a two-week tour of military bases all over the United States. At first, he couldn't believe what he was seeing. He thought we had created some sort of American Potemkin Village for his benefit, that we had taken our most experienced, best-trained commissioned officers and had dressed them up as enlisted men, then put them on display. Only towards the end of the second week did he realize that he was seeing the real thing. The servicemen and women that he met truly represented our military today.

He told us at the end of this trip, "No military in the world has as high quality NCOs as you find in the U.S. military." That, he said, is why our military is the best in the world.

In order to attract and retain these smart, skilled people, in order to compete with all of the other choices society offers them, we have to treat them right. I have committed to them, and I commit to you, that as long as I am the Secretary of Defense, treating our military people right will be my first priority.

I don't do this for sentimental reasons. I do it because the return on our investment in people will be a great payoff in the readiness of the forces.

Another big part of readiness involves good training. At the Bulge, many of you and your comrades were rushed to the front with incomplete training and with little or no combat experience. At that time, there was no other option. We did what we had to do. Today, we don't have to do that. We're giving our troops the resources and the means to be fully and highly trained before they have to face combat.

This is another area where information technology, in this case computer simulation, has revolutionized the military. In the Army, we no longer have to actually take units to the field to get training. Commanders and staff can practice

against opponents on the other end of a computer. This sharpens their skills before they deploy entire units for training and supplements our field exercises. But we do understand that nothing can ever substitute for field exercises. It's like training a football team. You can run through as many scenarios as you want, but you still have to get out there and scrimmage. And today in the Army we do still get out there and scrimmage. But computer simulation allow us to make our time in the field more effective.

I'd like to conclude my talk tonight by describing a painting that hangs in the hallway outside my office in the Pentagon. The painting depicts a poignant scene of a serviceman with his family in church. Clearly, he is praying before deployment and a long separation from his family. Below the painting is a wonderful inscription from Isaiah. In it, God says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for me?" Isaiah replies, "Here am I. Send me."

I like to remind people of this passage because it so aptly describes the spirit and the dedication of our armed forces both today and 50 years ago. When you were called on by your country, you answered the call. You said, "Here am I. Send me." Your answer, your service secured your country's freedom. For this, your country gives you its profound gratitude.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless America.

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 POST-DISPATCH
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Veterans Of Bulge Honored

By Harry Levins

Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Secretary of Defense William J. Perry, 67, has something in common with Army Meissner, 18, of St. Charles: Both got involved with the Battle of the Bulge as seniors in high school.

Perry was a senior in high school in Butler, Pa., in December 1944, when the German army fell upon American GIs in a surprise attack in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium and Luxembourg. He flew to St. Louis on Saturday to address veterans of that battle at their 50-year commemoration here.

Meissner also was on hand at the Regal Riverfront Hotel Saturday night.

Along with 58 other students from Orchard Farms High School, she helped to give the veterans souvenir plates [from Belgium] and souvenir medallions [from Luxembourg] to honor their role in stemming the German tide.

Perry offered the veterans the nation's "profound gratitude." He said: "You stopped the German breakthrough with true grit. But you paid a terrible price in blood."

The month-long Battle of the Bulge cost the Army 81,000 casualties. But the Germans lost at least 100,000 men to death, wounds or captivity.

Perry told the veterans and their families, who filled the 1,700-seat ballroom at the hotel, that the battle they fought "was bloodier than Antietam, bloodier than Gettysburg, bloodier than Pearl Harbor, bloodier than Normandy."

Before he spoke, retired Army Lt. Gen. Claude Kicklighter bade the veterans to toast one another. "Your nation will never forget your deeds," he said — and at that, the thousand or more veterans clinked glasses filled with Blush Nouveau from the Mount Pleasant Winery in Augusta, Mo.